

ARTICLE APPEARS
ON PAGE 2

BOSTON GLOBE
11 May 1985

Radar site in Siberia most critical pact breach

By Fred Kaplan
Globe Staff

WASHINGTON - President Ronald Reagan's statement yesterday that he might suspend US observance of the SALT II arms control treaty

EXPLAINER

raises anew questions about whether the Soviets have already violated this and other agreements.

In January 1984, the White House released a study accusing the Soviets of violating five provisions of various arms control treaties and of "almost certainly" or "probably" violating four more.

The most critical violation - and the one that has attracted the most discussion since - involved the Soviets' constructing a huge radar site in Siberia, in apparent violation of the 1972 ABM treaty.

The treaty prohibits new radars unless they are built "along the periphery of ... national territory" and facing outward. The Siberian radar is about 600 miles inside Soviet borders, and so seems inconsistent with the treaty's terms.

The Soviets have said the radar is designed to track objects in space, a mission for which the ABM treaty does allow an unlimited number of new radars. However, said a high-ranking State Department official, "It's neither the kind of radar they use for space tracking, nor is it in the right location." Several outside technical specialists agree with this assessment.

However, aides and specialists also said there is no evidence that the radar is designed to assist the operations of an antiballistic missile (ABM) system.

In fact, a 1984 classified CIA report - uncovered by the National Journal magazine - concluded it is not an ABM radar. According to the report, the radar is pointed in the wrong direction to track incoming US intercontinental ballistic missiles. It will operate at a frequency that makes the radar vulnerable to several effects of a nuclear explosion - hardly a desirable feature for a system designed to defend against a nuclear attack. And the radar has only one face, not the four on other Soviet ABM radars.

US intelligence officials said it is most likely an early-warning radar, built to fill a gap in the Soviets' coverage of attacks from the northern Pacific Ocean, especially from Trident submarines the US Navy has recently begun to deploy.

These officials said the radar was probably built so far inland for a simple logistical reason: Had it been constructed much closer to the coast, it would be stuck in the frozen tundra of eastern Siberia, which would make sustained maintenance and support very difficult if not impossible.

Still, officials said, this possible explanation does not contradict the fact that the radar does constitute a violation of the ABM treaty. Whether it calls for the United States following suit and also breaking the treaty is another question.

The White House report of January 1984 also accused the Soviets of committing a "probable violation" of SALT II provisions banning mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles and more than one "new type" of ICBM.

This charge referred to some evidence that the Soviets had deployed SS16 missiles, which are mobile, and that two new missiles, still under development, the SSX24 and SSX25, both depart significantly from the technical features of existing missiles, making them "new types."

The Soviets have denied deploying SS16s. US intelligence officials said the SS16 testing program was a failure and that, in any case, no SS16s have been tested in 10 years. The Soviets said the SSX25 is a legal modification of their SS13 missile. US officials said the Soviets, at the very least, have taken full advantage of a loophole in the treaty. The White House report said the evidence of SALT violations on these points is "somewhat ambiguous."